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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000824

SIPDIS

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LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05-16-13

TAGS: PGOV PTER PINS CE NO JA

SUBJECT: Norwegian FM presses Tigers, but no sign of
give yet; Latest re cohabitation stresses

Refs: Colombo 805, and previous

(U) Classified by Lewis Amselem, Deputy Chief of
Mission. Reasons: 1.5 (b,d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Norwegian FM Petersen met with the Tigers on May 15. Despite his best efforts, the Tigers did not say they will return to the talks, nor did they commit to attend the Tokyo donors conference. The Japanese Embassy has confirmed that it has received no further word from the Tigers re Tokyo. In other news, the cohabitation situation remains tense as the president and the PM continue to bicker. Until these snarls are cleared up, the GSL will continue to be in a bind. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) NORWEGIAN FM PRESSES TIGERS: Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen met with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader V. Prabhakaran and other key LTTE officials on May 15. GoN Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen and Ambassador Hans Brattskar also participated in the meeting, which took place in the town of Kilinochchi in the Tiger-controlled Wanni area of north-central Sri Lanka. Petersen reportedly used the meeting to press the LTTE to return to the peace talks with the Sri Lankan government and to commit to attend the June donors conference in Tokyo. In response, the Tigers reiterated their position that unless immediate action was taken to address the humanitarian situation in the north, they would not go to Tokyo or resume participation in the peace talks. Voicing another of their long-standing demands, the Tigers also said that the GSL must take immediate steps to reduce the size of its security zones in Jaffna.

3. (C) JAPANESE MULL OVER TOKYO: In additional news re the peace process, Koji Yagi, Japanese Embassy poloff, told us May 16 that his government had not received any word from the Tigers re their attendance at the Tokyo conference. (Note: Per Reftels, Japanese Special Envoy Akashi had set May 14 as the deadline for the Tigers to reconsider their previous statements that they would not attend the Tokyo meeting.) Yagi said his embassy had heard that the LTTE might be planning to send Japan a letter requesting a postponement in the Tokyo conference so the GSL had "time" to meet Tiger demands. Queried as to what the GoJ's plans were re the conference at this point, Yagi allowed that the issue was very problematic for his government. He said the GoJ continued to review what to do next.

4. (SBU) TAMIL POLITICIANS MEET THE LTTE: In other news re the peace track, a group of Tamil National Alliance (TNA) politicians met with the LTTE leadership in the Wanni on May 13. After the meeting, a joint LTTE-TNA statement was issued that stressed the LTTE's continued support of a negotiated political settlement of the dispute. Re the peace talks and the Tokyo conference, Mission has heard that the Tigers used the meeting with the TNA to reiterate their well-known stance that the GSL had to meet their demands before they agreed to cooperate.

5. (C) COHABITATION BICKERING CONTINUES: The latest news re Sri Lanka's tense cohabitation situation is that President Kumaratunga has sent a letter to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on May 14 stating that she would not change her decision re the takeover of the Development Lotteries Board. (Note: Late last week, per Reftels, the president announced that she was taking over the lotteries board. The GSL has refused to implement her decision.) Further, she rejected the PM's allegation that the takeover violated the Sri Lankan Constitution, asserting that she had acted in full conformity with the law. In terms of next moves in the tense situation, the PM is reportedly drafting a response to Kumaratunga's latest missive. There are also reports that President Kumaratunga, in a bid to show she has control of the agency, is planning to call for an emergency meeting of the directors of the

lotteries board soon.

16. (C) COMMENT: Until the snarls over the peace process and cohabitation are cleared up, the GSL will continue to be in a serious bind. The LTTE is clearly not in the mood to make things easy for it in terms of the peace track. In the meantime, the president is causing the GSL serious problems with respect to politics in the south. Even when things were going more smoothly, the GSL was overloaded enough. The weight of these added problems makes the overall challenge for the GSL that much larger. END COMMENT.

17. (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS